

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAR 28 1986**

date entered **APR 24 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic First African Baptist Church

and/or common First Baptist Church

**2. Location**

street & number 264-72 East Short Street

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Lexington

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Kentucky

code 021

county Fayette

code

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use                                   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                 | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>NA</u> in process                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government           |
|   | <u>NA</u> being considered                  | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial           |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military             |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum               |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> park                 |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence    |
|   |   |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific           |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation       |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other:               |

**4. Owner of Property**

name First Baptist Church

street & number 264-72 East Short Street

city, town Lexington

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Kentucky

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fayette County Clerk's Office

street & number 162 East Main Street

city, town Lexington

state Kentucky

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date January, 1980

\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort

state Kentucky

## 7. Description

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair            | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The church building is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century Italianate style Protestant chapel (Photo No. 1). Attached on the west side of the original building is the parish house which was constructed in 1926 in the Collegiate Tudor mode (Photo No. 2). The church is a one story brick building on a high raised basement, this being especially prominent due to the slope of the lot along DeWeese Street. There are three bays on the front facade and five on the east wall, with the first bay on the north corner of the east side blind (Photo No. 3). The windows are tall and round arched set in large recessed round arches that descend to ground level. Each of the windows along the side is divided by tracery to suggest two pointed arch Gothic lancet windows, although the early Romanesque Revival theme of the round arches is carried out by the brick corbelled cornice (Photo No. 4). The low gable on the front has a brick corbelled cornice, with a circular window in the center, filled with Gothic Revival tracery. During the 1920's a colossal stone portico with four widely spaced Tuscan columns was added across the front with a flat entablature (Photo No. 5). The portico is set on stone pedestals; the central entrance steps are recessed between them. The original sanctuary is over an auditorium at basement level. The double doors from the portico, which have applied Gothic tracery, lead to a narthex under part of the balcony (Photo No. 6).

The interior of the single-cell sanctuary has been remodeled several times, most recently after the tornado of March 28, 1974. A well-proportioned rectangular hall, it is distinguished by a classical Georgian cornice (Photo No. 7). The most striking feature is the large mural of Jesus Christ as a shepherd rescuing a stray lamb from the precarious edge of a cliff high over a river (presumably Jordan) (Photo No. 8). It is flanked by red draperies and tall unfluted Corinthian columns. Similar red curtains protect the baptismal pool at the southwest corner of the sanctuary, where the sacred ceremony of total immersion takes place (Photo No. 9). In the opposite corner is the raised seating of the choir, whose musical participation is of paramount importance in the services (Photo No. 10). The walls are painted to resemble stone in soft beige tones (Photo No. 11), and the opalescent-glass windows cast pleasing soft colors over them.

The Parish House is a two story brick building on a raised stone-surfaced basement. There are three double bays on the front facade with the main entrance at street level in the center. The entrance is through arched double doors linked vertically with deep-set arched windows above. Paired side windows have shallow Tudor arches under square labeled frames. There is an ornamented parapet above, with brick crenellations. The Parish House has a bare brick wall facing the parking lot to the west. Inside, there is a handsome Arts & Crafts Tudor staircase. Most of this building is used as offices and classrooms.

## 8. Significance

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian                                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900–                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                              |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)<br>Black History |
| <b>Specific dates</b>                         | Circa 1850, 1926                                 |   | <b>Builder/Architect</b>                        | unknown  |

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First African Baptist Church, built circa 1850, is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century Italianate style Protestant chapel. A significant architectural feature of the exterior of the church are the windows on the east side which are divided with tracery, giving them a Gothic appearance and which are set in large recessed round arches that descend to ground level. The attached Parish House, circa 1926, built in the Collegiate Tudor style is sympathetic to the earlier church building in style and scale. The First African Baptist Church is the first African Church to be founded in Kentucky and is probably the third oldest African Baptist Church in the nation. The pastors of this congregation, from its beginnings in about 1790, have been men who have been influential in the lives of the black population, not only in Central Kentucky but throughout the Commonwealth. This influence began with the first pastor Peter Durrett, who was a slave who came into Kentucky with his master from Virginia and whose preaching brought new hope to his oppressed brothers in the Kentucky wilderness through the more recent pastors such as Homer Nutter whose strong leadership guided many in the black community through the turbulent years of the 1960's, resulting in equal rights.

Peter Durrett, who was known as Brother Captain or later in life as the Old Captain, was the founder of this congregation around 1790. He preached and admonished lost souls to accept the Savior and his following quickly grew, resulting in the earliest black congregation west of the Allegheny Mountains. Another eminent early pastor was the Reverend London Ferrell. Born a slave in Virginia in 1789, he came to Lexington as a freed slave in 1812. He and his wife were allowed to remain in Kentucky by means of a special legislative act. London Ferrell was a well-known humanitarian who built a firm foundation and took the Old Captain's church to new heights by baptizing over 5,000 people during his ministry. Upon his death in 1854, he was honored with a funeral attended by thousands and it is reputed that the only funeral larger in Lexington was that of Henry Clay. These two early pastors were followed by many outstanding men. Reverend William J. Simmons, the sixth pastor, was a graduate of Howard University and in 1890 was called to be President of State University and what is now known as Simmon's Bible College in Louisville, Kentucky. The eighth pastor was Reverend S. E. Smith who was extremely active politically on behalf of the blacks in Kentucky. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention for at least sixteen years. In 1926, the Reverend Homer Nutter became pastor and served in that post until 1976. Reverend Nutter's 50 year pastorate saw many changes for the people of his church and his strong leadership guided them well during many of those turbulent years. In 1975, the present pastor, the thirteenth, the Reverend Leon H. McIntyre came to the First Baptist Church and today leads the large congregation towards the two hundredth anniversary of this Church in the same tradition of its founders.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .216

Quadrangle name Lexington West, Kentucky

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 7       | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1        | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

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D 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard S. DeCamp, Executive Director

organization Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission date December, 1985

street & number 253 Market Street telephone (606) 255-8312

city or town Lexington state Kentucky

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature David L. Meyer

title State Historic Preservation Officer date March 19, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

James M. McPherson date 4/24/86  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet First African Baptist  
Church, Lexington, KY

Item number 9

Page 1

Lexington City Directories, 1806 to present, particularly 1887 to 1902. Kentucky Room, Lexington Public Library, and elsewhere.

McIntyre, Dr. L. H., Our Grain of the Salt - unpublished manuscript, (Lexington, 1985).

Perrin, William Henry, ed., History of Fayette County, Kentucky, Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., 1882.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1886 to present, Map Department, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

Townsend, John Wilson, The Love of the Meadowland, (Lexington, 1911).

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date entered

Continuation sheet First African Baptist  
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Item number 10

Page 1

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary begins at a point (A) (which is at the southwest corner of the intersection of East Short and DeWeese Streets) and follows a line with the west side of DeWeese Street, proceeding 85 feet southwest to a point (B), thence northwest along the rear property line 100 feet to a point (C), thence north along the west property line 85 feet to a point (D), thence southeast along a line with Short Street 100 feet to the point of origin (A), thereby incorporating the nominated church and parish house. The boundary was drawn to include the property owned by the church, including the church and parish house.



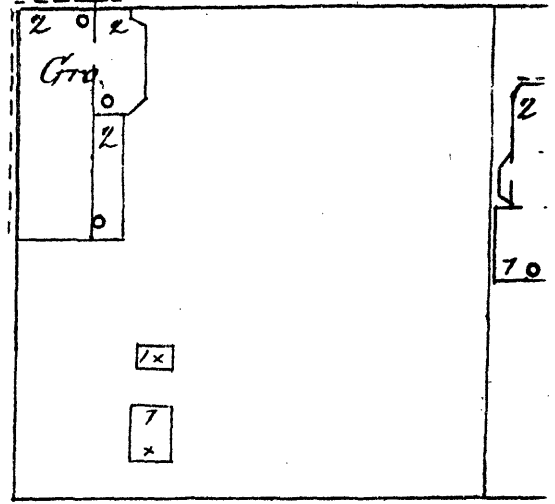
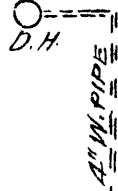
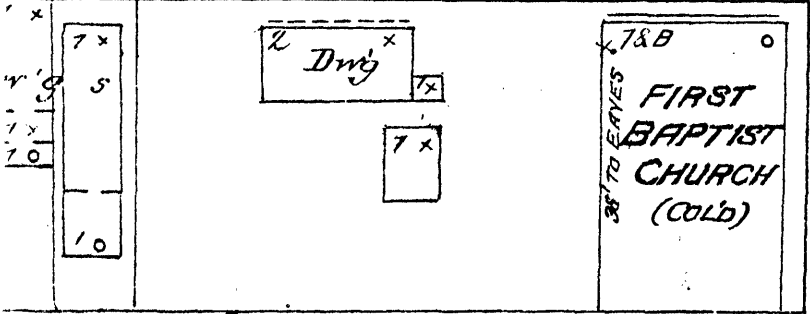
795. 799.

**E. SHORT**

**50 ST.**

792 794

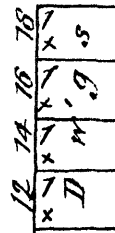
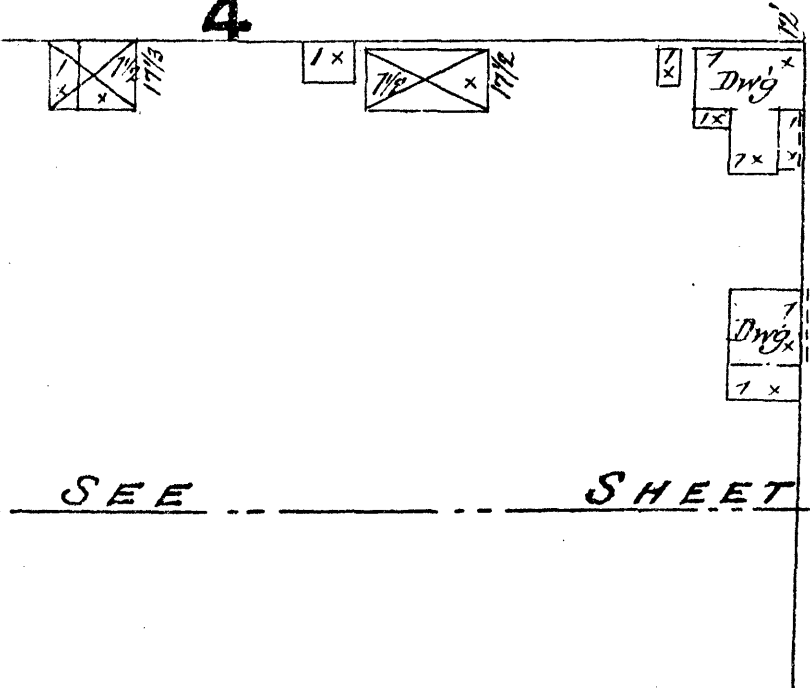
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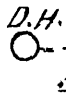
**5**

**DEWEESE**

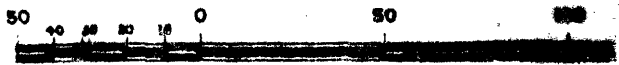


**SEE SHEET**

**No 15.**

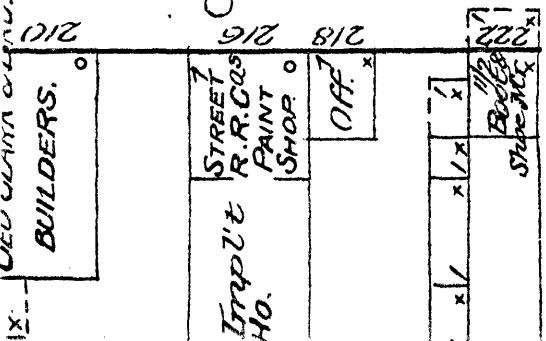
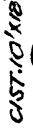


Scale of Feet.



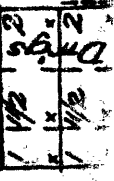
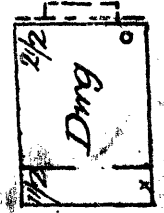
**F MAIN**

**F MAIN**



**PIVE**

**ARD**



202

205

First African Baptist Church  
Lexington  
Fayette County  
Kentucky

Sanborn Insurance Map  
University of Kentucky (Source)

Date: 1890  
Scale: 1" = 50'





First African Baptist Church  
Lexington  
Fayette County  
Kentucky

Urban County Planning Commission Map  
Fayette County

Scale: 1" = 100'  
Date: 1976